

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-01 INR-07 L-03

NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 EB-07 OMB-01

TRSE-00 USIE-00 INRE-00 NSCE-00 SSO-00 /060 W

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O 062203Z DEC 76

FM AMEMBASSY OTTAWA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 1834

C O N F I D E N T I A L OTTAWA 4809

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PGOV, PINT, CA

SUBJ: GENERAL STOCK-TAKING REPLACES SHOCK OVER PQ VICTORY

1. INITIAL FRENETIC ATTENTION BY MEDIA AND JUST ABOUT EVERYONE ELSE HERE TO RAMIFICATIONS OF PQ VICTORY IN QUEBEC HAS NOW SLIPPED INTO NEW STAGE OF GENERAL STOCK-TAKING. BOTH FED AND PQ GOVERNMENTS APPEARS TO BE INTERESTED PRIMARILY IN LETTING THE OTHER MAKE THE FIRST, DRAMATIC MOVE. FROM ALL PRE-CONFERENCE NOISES, IT APPEARS THAT PQ WILL MAKE NO EXTRAORDINARY DEMANDS AT MEETING OF FED AND PROV FINANCE MINISTERS DEC 6 AND 7 AND AT SUBSEQUENT FIRST MINISTERS MEETING DEC 13 AND 14. INDEED, LEVESQUE INDICATED DURING DEC 5 RADIO INTERVIEW THAT QUEBEC REPS AT THE TWO CONFERENCES WOULD ACT AS MEMBERS OF "ANY HONEST AND, WE HOPE, VIGOROUS PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENT."

2. MEANWHILE, THERE ARE SIMILAR INDICATIONS THAT FEDGOV HAS NO INTEREST IN PUSHING ANY NEW OR SENSITIVE ISSUE NOW. LEVESQUE INDICATED THAT, BECAUSE OF OPENING OF QUEBEC NATIONAL ASSEMBLY SESSION DEC 14, HE WOULD BE UNABLE TO REMAIN FOR DISCUSSION OF CONSTITUTIONAL ISSUES AT FIRST MINISTERS CONFERENCE. ONE OF PM TRUDEAU'S DOMESTIC ADVISORS, TOM AXOWRTHY, TOLD EMBOFF THAT TRUDEAU HAD NO DESIRE FOR DISCUSSION OF CONSTITUTIONAL ISSUES AND WOULD DO SO ONLY AT BEHEST OF PROVINCIAL PREMIERS.

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3. SCRUPULOUS EFFORT OF BOTH SIDES TO PRESENT

"BUSINESS AS USUAL" FACE AT THESE TWO CONFERENCES DOES NOT
MEAN LACK OF HARD BARGAINING. FEDGOV WISH TO SHIFT TO
PROVINCES GENERALLY GREATER SHARE OF FISCAL
RESPONSIBILITIES AND VARYING PROVINCIAL DESIRES
(QUEBEC'S INCLUDED) TO STRIKE BEST PAROCHIAL DEAL IN
THIS REGARD PROMISE HARD BARGAINING AND LIKELY USUAL
NAME-CALLING. BUT THIS IS "BUSINESS AS USUAL" IN
COMPLEX AREA OF INTERCONNECTED AND SHIFTING FED-PROV
RELATIONS IN TAXING AREA. WHAT WE DO NOT EXPECT TO
SEE AT THESE CONFERENCES OR POSSIBLY EVEN FOR NEXT
SEVERAL MONTHS IS A MAJOR PQ-FEDGOV CONFRONTATION.
RATHER, WE ARE IN THE CIRCLING AND SNIFFING STAGE IN
WHICH EACH WANTS THEOTHER TO TRY FOR THE FIRST BITE.
ENDERS

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NNN

Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: REPORTS, ELECTION RESULTS, POLITICAL SITUATION, PROVINCIAL ELECTIONS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 06 DEC 1976
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: ellisoob
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1976OTTAWA04809
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D760450-1009
From: OTTAWA
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1976/newtext/t19761269/aaaachzf.tel
Line Count: 75
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION EUR
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 2
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: ellisoob
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 15 APR 2004
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <15 APR 2004 by BoyleJA>; APPROVED <04 AUG 2004 by ellisoob>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
04 MAY 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: GENERAL STOCK-TAKING REPLACES SHOCK OVER PQ VICTORY
TAGS: PGOV, PINT, CA
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 04 MAY 2006